

UCAS

helping students
into higher education



Careers & Progression

The UCAS

Personal Statement

The Personal Statement

If you are applying to university, you must include a personal statement on your UCAS form. This is your chance to influence the admissions tutors, and explain your motivation in applying for that course. The majority of universities do not interview students anymore, so the personal statement is your only chance to “sell yourself”.

This is also the section of the form that takes most people longest to complete, so it's a good idea to start making a draft statement now, to be prepared for the UCAS deadline in autumn.

This leaflet includes some tips on how to complete your personal statement, and the kind of things you could include.



There is no ideal or recommended way to structure your statement, but it should usually cover the following sections:-

- **COURSE CHOICE**

Your reason for choosing your course at university, and the background for your interest in the subject. This is the most important part of the personal statement and the section admissions tutors will be most interested in. It should show your enthusiasm and motivation for the subject.

- **CURRENT STUDIES**

you enjoy some aspects of studying Particular interests you have in your current studies, any extra reading that you have done, projects or fieldwork you have undertaken. Evidence that

Key Skills – admissions tutors are looking for students who have a wide range of skills. The skills you have developed in your Key Skills lessons will be increasingly sought after both by admissions tutors and employers.

- **ABOUT YOU**

Activities you do outside of college Enrichment options etc. Clubs/societies you are a member of, any travelling you have done, positions of responsibility you've had, hobbies etc. These all give admissions tutors an idea about what

kind of a person you are, and whether you will make a good contribution to the course – socially as well as academically.

- WORK EXPERIENCE

What you have done, departments you worked in, responsibilities etc. Remember that for some courses, work experience is essential e.g. Medicine, Law, Nursing, Primary Teaching, Physiotherapy.

- CAREER ASPIRATIONS

What do you hope to do with your degree; will it help towards a chosen career? If you are asking to defer your entry, what do you plan to do with your gap year, and how will it help your studies?

Don't repeat information that is already included in your UCAS form e.g. name, subjects etc.

These are just some ideas, but your personal statement should reflect you to maximum advantage. Use some of the suggestions on the following pages to make a draft statement. You should then check this with your tutor, before making your final application.



Make sure that your personal statement is your own work

UCAS will, along with other verification checks for identity and academic qualifications, test applications to detect plagiarism. If UCAS have cause to question your application, they will inform all the universities and colleges to which you have applied. They will then take the action they consider to be appropriate. UCAS will also contact you by email. UCAS now use specialist software to detect plagiarism called the '**Similarity Detection Service**' – this has detected approximately 1600 possible cases of plagiarism this year!

Do's and Don'ts for Personal Statements

Don't

Don't mention activities or responsibilities without referring to skills and experience gained. Admissions tutors have hundreds of form's to read – they won't have time to 'read between the lines'.

Don't refer to experiences that are too long ago (e.g. year 10) particularly if you have more recent experience.

Don't mention interests without being more specific e.g. for reading mention authors or genres, likewise with music or art – mention particular artists.

Don't exaggerate or lie?

Don't apply for too many very different courses, making it difficult to write a convincing personal statement which supports the application.

Don't write a statement which makes your choices look random and un-thought-out.

Do

Do give reasons for why you want to study the course – more than just enjoying the subject(s). Remember that there will be competition for places so you need to be convincing.

Do make a reference to your current studies – what you enjoy and why and the skills you have gained.

Do try to make a reference to your long term career plans and make a link to your course choice. You can do this even if you are not studying a vocational degree by talking about the skills that you hope to gain while at university.

Do mention positions of responsibility with some examples of duties.

Do aim to present an image of yourself as an active and well rounded individual – not just academic.

Do be reflective. If you make a point like 'I like reading, I travelled abroad' say why and what you get (got) from doing this.

Do show your statement to other people – parents, friends, family, teachers, careers advisers, so they can check the spelling and grammar and see if they can think of things to include which you might have forgotten.

Do make sure that the statement is clear well put together with a concluding paragraph or statement.

The Format of the Personal Statement

Using your notes from the previous “Personal Statement” tutorial session, write a paragraph on each of the areas below. You can use some of the “Universal Phrases” and “Skills and Abilities” given as examples.

1. Course Choice

Why you are applying for this course, any extra readings etc., field trips, project work you have done. Enthusiasm for the subject. Include any relevant work experience you have done.

2. Current Studies

What you are studying and what you have got out of it, the academic skills your subjects have given you, how they will help you in your chosen course at university.

3. Career Ideas and Relevant Work Experience

If you have any, though at this stage you may not. Many people apply to courses because they are interested in this subject, rather than because of they have any career ideas.

4. About You

Enrichment options you have done, positions of responsibility you have had, clubs/groups you are a member of, work. Don't just list these, say what you have got out of them.

5. Concluding paragraph

This will sum up your statement, and leave the admissions tutor with a final impression of you.

Using all your information from last year, fine tune your Personal Statement.



Draft Personal Statement

Personal Statement

Section 1 - Course Choice:

Section 2 - Current Studies

Section 3 - Career Aspirations and Relevant Work Experience

Section 4 - About You

Section 5 - Concluding Paragraph

Useful Words for Your Personal Statement - An Alternative to Being Boring!

Develop(ed)	Become, broaden, grown, progressed
Enjoy	Look forward to, relish, welcome
Fascinated	Absorbed, attracted, inspired, motivated
Follow	Appreciate, grasp, comprehend, fan of, understand
Gained	Acquired, discovered, realised, recognised
Good	Benefit, great, improve, success
Hobby	Leisure pursuit, pastime, recreation, relaxation
Interested	Active in, attracted, curious, motivated
Interesting	Appealing, challenging, thought-provoking, absorbing
Particularly	Exceptionally, mainly, often, strongly
Plan	Consider, organise, project, strategy
Spare-Time	Free-Time, time on my hands, Time to kill
Study	Examine, investigate, research
Topic	Content, issue, matter, point, theme

Some useful phrases

Course choice

Having thoroughly enjoyed the study of.....
...enable me to pursue my interest in
... look forward to studying in greater depth....

Work Experience

Work experience confirmed my interest in ...
... enabled me to develop a number of important skills.
...was essential in developing....
...gave me the opportunity to...

In College

Being a member of.....was extremely rewarding.
Taking responsibility for ...has developed skills in...

Outside college

Travelling to...has broadened my perspective on life by...
My interest in...has given me the opportunity to...
I particularly enjoy...
I have developed a number of abilities through...
Team sports such as ...have enabled me to...
...has been particularly important to me because...
I am enthusiastic member of...

Concluding Statement

My experience in...confirm I am suited to a degree/HND in...
I believe I will make a successful student on (chosen course) because....
....should prove invaluable preparation for life at university.
I am well prepared to study....
I am looking forward to furthering my knowledge in....



Skills and abilities

The following is a list of useful academic, work related and general personal skills that both employers and universities are looking for.

Independence

Empathy

Responsible

Communication

Helpful

Organised

Managing Others

Computer Literacy

Sociable

Supportive

Efficiency

Confidence

Trustworthy

Diplomacy

Problem Solving

Logical Thinking

Approachable

Working to Deadlines

Hardworking

Co-operate with Others

Time Management

Self – Motivation

Teamwork

Sensitivity

Self-expression

Working Independently

Using Initiative

Committed

Listening

Enthusiastic



Personal Achievements

Have you gained any of these skills from activities you have done either at college or outside college? Things you may have been involved with could include:

Work Experience

Voluntary Work

Weekend/Saturday Job

Taken part in/organised charity event

Position of responsibility

Taken part in play/pantomime etc

Involvement in sports team

Member of band/group/orchestra

Country/National/International representative

Play/teach musical instrument

Duke of Edinburgh award

Had an article/poem etc published

These are just some suggestions, there could be lots of other things that you are involved in as well.



What you need to know when completing your Personal Statement on line

- There is no spell checker therefore type your personal statement in WORD and spell check here and save as type in rich text format before cutting and pasting onto the UCAS APPLY form
- Automatically defaults to font size 12.
- Number of lines available is **47**. (However it is **quality** rather than quantity that admission tutors are looking for so there is no need to fill all the space)
- When dividing into paragraphs **do not indent** as this can lead to a poor layout when the work is transferred to the UCAS form
- If possible use a line spacing between paragraphs to obtain an attractive layout



Sample Personal Statement

I wish to apply to study Law based on my own personal enthusiasm for what I consider to be a challenging but genuinely stimulating subject. I have been supported within my choice by my family and would ultimately wish to follow a career at the Bar. I have particularly applied to courses that specialise in European Law, which is a personal interest of mine.

I am currently studying three A levels at college in Law, History and Geography. Last year I completed an AS in Sociology and achieved a Grade B. Within my study of Law, I have particularly enjoyed the English Legal System and am currently looking forward with anticipation to the examination of Criminal Law. In History, I have been particularly interested in the study of social life within the medieval period and have found the notion of justice to be somewhat different to the modern day! Likewise I have found Geography stimulating in the examination of geomorphology – particularly the action of glaciation. In these A level subjects I have learned the importance of personal research and verification of evidence which would appear to me to be essential qualities for a Law student.

I have already engaged in valuable work experience and part-time employment which has offered a clear insight into the demands of modern day employment. Whilst still at school I took a week's work experience at Comet and the following summer I gained part-time employment in the electrical department at Selfridges. This post involved customer service and has helped the development of several Key Skills including Working with Others and Communication.

At college, I try to take an active part in student life, which explains why I successfully put my name forward for election to the Student Council. This body plays a key role in offering suggestions to the college management in improving student provision. It also organises several social events throughout the year. Although this has been demanding in terms of time, nevertheless I have found it to be a rewarding and very enjoyable post. Furthermore it has given me a forum to practice my public speaking and the growth in my self-confidence can only be an advantage when arguing legal issues in a University seminar.

In my spare time I participate in a number of activities but particularly enjoy listening to music (where I am renowned for having a wide taste!) and attending concerts throughout the country with a close circle of friends. More recently I have started to explore the possibilities of our personal computer and am pleased to be becoming more acquainted with word processing and have also produced a database of legal cases for my A level course.

I try to keep fit by visiting the local gym once a week and play five-a-side football at weekends. Increasingly I am taking an interest in national politics and I read the Guardian in the college library and find Hugo Young's articles interesting. I am beginning to understand some of the issues relating to the UK possible entry to the EURO.

If my application were successful, I would enjoy both the study of Law and my participation in the wider student life.

The UCAS Tariff

<u>GCE/VCE Qualifications</u>				<u>BTEC Nationals</u>			<u>CACHE Diploma</u>		<u>Diploma in Foundation Studies (Art and Design)⁴</u>	
GCE AS/AS VCE	GCE A level/AVCE	AVCE Double Award	Free standing Maths ¹	Award	Certificate	Diploma	Theory	Practical		points
						DDD				360
						DDM				320
									Distinction	285
						DMM				280
		AA			DD	MMM	A			240
									Merit	225
		AB								220
		BB			DM	MMP	B			200
		BC								180
									Pass	165
		CC			MM	MPP	C			160
		CD								140
	A	DD		D	MP	PPP	D	A		120
	B	DE						B		100
	C	EE		M	PP		E	C		80
A	D							D		60
B										50
C	E			P				E		40
D										30
E			A							20
			B							17
			C							13
			D							10
			E							7

¹ Covers free-standing Mathematics qualifications - Using and Applying Statistics, Working with Algebraic and Graphical Techniques, Modelling with Calculus.